

Berlin, November 11, 1961

On the one question on which he has gone to the President he has been backed up (did not disclose question). Nevertheless, feeling here that a tough U.S. stand is not backed and will be overruled. Problem is one of alliance. Fourteen allies bicker among selves until the question is long since past. De Gaulle proposed the Directory for the wrong reasons, but he was essentially right in the need for some method of making and taking emphatic decisions more promptly.

Berlin, however, isn't the real problem. Khrushchev doesn't want a war over Berlin, or a war period. No incident in Berlin -- short of an uprising by the East Germans -- is going to be allowed to grow into a war. The real Communist aim is West Germany -- to detach it from NATO, neutralize it and if possible absorb it. ~~symbol~~ Berlin is merely a symbol of Communist intentions and of our intentions.

Recent incidents on the Friederichstrasse have convinced Clay that we could have acted to prevent the wall without a clash. There was no necessity to tear it down, just move troops in to prevent it from being built in the first place. Why didn't we? There was complete confusion after the Paris foreign ministers' meeting. Agreement on the three main points: troops, access, Berlin freedom, seemed to rule out others. Acceptance of the wall did violate our rights and West German rights. It gave Khrushchev very much of what he wanted.

Clay has the impression that the British always want to negotiate. Yet in the field, there is no question but that the British would fight. Here the French are perhaps the least reliable. The British always move troops at the proper time and act to defend principle even when they don't agree.

Question of passes has not been important except as symbol. Soviet Union soon acknowledged its own responsibility by moving its tanks in; it would not trust East Germans. Clay views this exchange as a U.S. success.

Exodus of people and capital from Berlin has been pretty well reversed. Capital is coming back in. (Albert Hershing, USIS Information Officer, says that most of exodus was people taking precautions by setting up dual residences, or older people on pensions making the move. Little change of industry.)

Trouble with the little by little approach is that is means inevitably that over the long ~~minimum~~ period people will lose confidence and Berlin will die. What can be done? Clay would insist that West Berlin be part of West Germany, covered by Federal Republic economically and politically, and if defended by NATO. A U.N. solution? Yes, Clay would welcome U.N. agencies to broaden reason for existence, though he does not think U.N. headquarters here would be feasible. He would not want to see U.S. responsibility abrogated for less precise, amorphous U.N. arrangement.

Clay thinks very highly of Willy Brandt, SPD "right wing" -- Erler, etc. More highly, in fact, than of FDP or some CDU people. Is not worried about former Nazis as such, but thinks that some of right wing extremists could be troublesome.

De facto recognition of East Germany does not trouble Clay. There already is a great deal of it in the inter-zonal agreements that cover civil traffic to and from Berlin. These work smoothly. It is a question of semantics, but he thinks West Germans could accept. What about the Oder Neisse Line? Khrushchev doesn't worry about it, but it is a matter of considerable concern to the Poles. Hence it is a liability. Clay would solve it by having Western Powers undertake to guarantee that the Oder-Neisse line would never become a cause for war. This would give away nothing and nevertheless would get the point across.

Clay had some trouble with the press and was surprised by mishandling of his first backgrounder. Nevertheless, the effect was good. Some Germans have told him it was necessary for them to be reminded of reality. Also, there was a tendency to worship Clay as a hero when he first came. This quickly demolished that little personality cult.

Clay spoke at the end of his own personal philosophy, sounding (and looking, strangely) rather like MacArthur. By giving way in varied places and by little bites we do not prevent war. We have seemed to yield to nuclear blackmail! Now we have reason to believe Soviets have fewer missiles than we had thought. They have enough to ~~demolish~~ demolish Europe, but not to destroy the U.S. (although they could badly cripple us.) U.S. has enough to demolish them. Great fear in Western Europe is that U.S. would not use, and talk of conventional forces merely increases secret European apprehensions. We have approximately two years in which to make clear that U.S. would use its nuclear strength for a first strike in certain situations. After that it will be forever too late, because Soviet Union will have capacity to flatten us. Hence we must make clear that we will not flinch in a contest of wills. This will not inevitably prevent nuclear war, but it is the best chance. What Clay really seems to be suggesting is that we engage in a little nuclear blackmail of our own. He has much confidence in the ability and toughness of "our young President"; but unless we make it unmistakable that we are determined to defend the West in every particular and win the ~~next~~ contest of wills, we will continue to lose.

Interview with E. Allan Lightner, Jr., U.S. Political Representative (Minister):

Very gloomy over U.S. position. Feeling not backed up from Washington. Every time there is a question of a small military or political move, it has to go through so many people that it is always diluted. Where? Hard to say: Norstad in Paris, pressure by Allies, or Pentagon. Politically, Ambassadorial Group in Washington is where the bottleneck seems to lie.

Incident in which Lightner was involved (he was first U.S. civilian official challenged when he took his wife to opera in East Berlin) was altogether unplanned. Germans couldn't believe it, and now mission is of two minds whether to say anything. Of course subsequent excursions were planned. Lightner was backed in his own case, but as succeeding episodes developed Washington seemed

to grow increasingly more apprehensive. Lightner, as contrasted with Clay, does not think we succeeded in proving anything. We sent a few vehicles into East Berlin; but after all they didn't go anywhere; they just turned around and came back. Washington was plainly unhappy over the confrontation of tanks, even though there was no danger in Lightner's view that the Russians would have started shooting.

(Aside: Hemsing says Vopo defectors here have confirmed the story that East German forces did not have live ammunition when the wall was first instituted as a barbed wire fence);

Since U.S. has insisted on license plates from East Berlin having a clear Soviet marking like ours rather than merely "CD", number of trips has been cut markedly. Previously, many SED people were coming through nominally to talk to SED people in West Berlin, actually to carry out Communist tactics.

Lightner thinks U.S. in bad position and getting worse through appearance of unsureness and indecision. He doubts whether Kennedy-Khrushchev meeting produced good effect on Khrushchev; the pressure has increased since then. From what he has read in cables of conversations, there was little rebuttal of Khrushchev (same is true, Hemsing says, of Kennedy-Gromyko talks). (These may be unfair in that they reflect only one side).

Question is not one of nuclear war, but of holding course a bit longer rather than announcing in advance that we will turn aside.

U.S. has been planting seeds among Communist embassies that anyone else but Ulbricht in East Germany might be easier to deal with. Khrushchev doesn't like ~~the~~ Ulbricht (the wall gave U. what he wanted), and there is a chance of undermining him. This may have been reflected in a question Mr. Hochman asked me in Prague which I neglected to put down above: would the U.S. be willing to deal with any other leader in East Germany?

Despite tough talk, neither Clay nor Lightner is a saber rattler; and Clay, in particular, does not seem to be victim of localitis. Lightner shows a few of the frustrations of being out on the end of a long limb. He deals directly with Washington although he is technically under Red Dowling in Bonn and sends him copies of everything.